CLAIMS

We claim:

1   1.   A method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient, the multi-media

2   message being created by a sender for delivery by an animated entity, the method

3   comprising:

4   recording an audio message from the sender;

5   receiving a choice of one of a plurality of animated entities to deliver the

6   message;

7   conforming the audio message to movements associated with the animated entity

8   to create a multi-media message; and

9   delivering the multi-media message to the recipient with the animated entity

10   speaking the recorded audio message from the sender.

1   2.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1, further

2   comprising:

3   after recording the audio message from the sender, converting the audio message

4   to a text message and presenting a text version of the audio message to the sender; and

5   delivering the multi-media message to the recipient upon approval of the text

6   message from the sender.

1   3.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,

2   wherein the multi-media message is sent as an e-mail to the recipient.

1   4.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,

2   wherein the multi-media message is sent as an instant message to the recipient.

1   5.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,

2   wherein the multi-media message is sent over the Internet to the recipient.

1   6.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,

2   wherein the multi-media message is sent to the recipient via a wireless network.

1   7.   A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using

2   an animated entity, the sender choosing the animated entity from a plurality of animated

3   entities, the method comprising:

4   recording a sender audio message;

5   associating the sender audio message with the animated entity to create the multi-

6   media message; and

7   processing the multi-media message for the recipient such that the animated

8   entity speaks the sender audio message.

1   8.   The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 7, wherein associating

2   the sender audio message with the animated entity further comprises:

3   using an automatic speech recognition system to convert the audio message to a

4   text message;

5   presenting the text message to the sender; and

6   after receiving approval from the sender for the text message, using the text

7   message to coordinate mouth movements for the animated entity.

1   9.   The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 7, wherein the multi-

2   media message is sent over the Internet.

1   10.   The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 7, wherein the multi-

2   media message is sent in an instant message.

1   11.   The method of sending a multimedia message of claim 7, wherein the multi-

2   media message is sent over a wireless network.

1   12.   A method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient, the multi-media

2   message being created by a sender for delivery by an animated entity, the method

3   comprising:

4   receiving a text message from the sender;

5   recording a sender audio message corresponding to the text message;

6   receiving a choice of one of a plurality of animated entities to deliver the

7   message;

8   conforming the sender audio message to movements associated with the

9   animated entity to create a multi-media message; and

10   delivering the multi-media message to the recipient with the animated entity

11   speaking the recorded audio message from the sender.

1   13.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 12,

2   further comprising:

3   delivering the multi-media message to the recipient upon approval of the sender

4   audio message by the sender.

1   14.   The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 12,

2   further comprising:

3   recording the sender audio message corresponding to the text message after the

4   sender makes a request to input an audible version of the text message.

1   15.   A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using

2   an animated entity, the sender choosing the animated entity from a plurality of animated

3   entities, the method comprising:

4   receiving a text message from the sender;

5   recording a sender audio message corresponding to the text message;

6   associating the sender audio message with the animated entity to create the multi-

7   media message; and

8   processing the multi-media message for the recipient such that the animated

9   entity speaks the sender audio message.

1   16.   A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using

2   an animated entity, the sender choosing the animated entity from a plurality of animated

3   entities, the method comprising:

4   receiving a text message from the sender;

5   recording a sender audio message corresponding to the text message;

6   conforming the audio message to movements associated with the animated entity

7   to create a multi-media message; and

8   delivering the multi-media message to the recipient, wherein the animated entity

9   uses a synthesized voice having characteristics associated with the recorded sender audio

10   message.

1   17.   The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using

2   an animated entity of claim 16, wherein the synthesized voice includes an accent of the

3   sender voice.

1   18.   A method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics, the

2   method comprising:

3   receiving an audio recording from the sender;

4   parameterizing the audio recording into audio parameters; and

5   using the audio parameters, synthesizing a voice that is not the sender's voice but

6   includes at least one sender voice characteristic.

1   19.   The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of

2   claim 18, wherein the at least one sender voice characteristic is one of an accent, voice

3   inflection, pitch, rhythm, or dialect.

1   20.   The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of

2   claim 18, further comprising, before receiving the audio recording, receiving a text

3   version of a message associated with the audio recording.

1   21.   The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of

2   claim 18, further comprising, after receiving the audio recording, using an automatic

3   speech recognizer and presenting a text version of the audio recording to the sender for

4   approval before parameterizing the audio recording.

1   22.   The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of

2   claim 18, wherein parameterizing the audio recording into audio parameters further

3   comprises using an alignment program for segmenting the audio recording into

4   phonemes and labeling the audio recording with the phonemes, duration, pitch, stress

5   and other parameters.

1   23.   A method of synthesizing a non-sender voice with sender voice characteristics,

2   the method comprising:

3   receiving a text message from the sender;

4   receiving an audio recording from the sender associated with the text message;

5   parameterizing the audio recording into audio parameters using segmentation;

6   and

7   using the audio parameters, synthesizing the non-sender voice to have sender

8   voice characteristics.

1   24.   The method of synthesizing a non-sender voice with sender voice characteristics,

2   wherein the sender voice characteristics comprise at least one of accent, voice inflection,

3   pitch, rhythm, or dialect.